

We are asking: Please, let that legislation go free. Don't let the gun lobby prevail over the families across this country who want to stop the gun violence.

Don't let the gun lobby rule what takes place in this Senate or in the House of Representatives. We have to do it now, before April 20, before the anniversary of that terrible day at Columbine High School. No one will forget it. No one who is alive and old enough to understand what took place will forget it. One year is time enough to act. April 20.

People across this country are asking: What has Congress done? What will they do? If one thinks they will be satisfied to hear that we have done nothing at all, I urge them to think again. And I urge people within the range of my voice to listen to what some are saying—that Congress will do nothing about it, even though children die across this country and adults die across this country. Over 33,000 a year die from gunshot wounds. We wound 134,000. In Vietnam, we lost 58,000 over the whole 10-year period that war was fought. But we lose 33,000 Americans a year—young, old, black, white, Christian, Jewish, it doesn't matter.

So I plead with my colleagues, give our people a safer country. They are entitled to that. If we have an enemy outside our borders, we are prepared to fight that enemy. We have service personnel and airplanes with the latest equipment. We try to provide our law enforcement people—the police departments, FBI, drug enforcement agents, and border patrol people—with the weapons to fight crime. But each year, 33,000 people die from gunshots in this country. We ought not to permit that. I plead with my colleagues to help our people. Let's try to move forward with gun safety legislation as quickly as we can when we return the week after next.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMS. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FEDERAL DAIRY POLICY

Mr. GRAMS. Recently, I came to the floor to address Federal dairy policy, specifically focusing on an erroneous but often repeated claim that dairy compacts are necessary today to guarantee a supply of fresh, locally produced milk to consumers. During that time, I dealt with how this is a myth similar to urban legends that are assumed to be true because they are repeated so often. Another dairy myth that you may hear a great deal is that dairy compacts preserve small dairy farms. Mr. President, this is simply not true, and this afternoon I want to point out the reasons why it is untrue.

The Northeast Dairy Compact sets a floor price that processors must pay for fluid milk in the region. Ostensibly,

this is supposed to provide small farmers with the additional income necessary to help them survive during hard times. In its practical effect, it doesn't work that way at all. In fact, it has provided financial incentives for big dairy farms to get even bigger.

Consider the cases of Vermont and Pennsylvania. Vermont is in the Northeast Dairy Compact and Pennsylvania is not. Before the formation of the compact in 1997, Vermont had 2,100 dairy farms with an average herd size of 74 cows per farm. By 1998, the number of farms had fallen nearly 10 percent to 1900 dairy farms, but the average herd size had increased to 85 cows per farm. That is a 15-percent increase.

Meanwhile, during the same period of time in Pennsylvania—again, without the compact—the number of dairy farms fell 3 percent, from 11,300 to 10,900, but the average herd size increased only from 56 cows to 57 cows. Thus, in a compact State such as Vermont, the number of dairy farms fell significantly while the average herd size per farm increased significantly. And then compare that to the noncompact State of Pennsylvania during the same period. Their number of dairy farms dropped by a smaller number, and farm herd sizes increased by an even smaller percentage. So this does not appear in any way to be a compact to protect small dairy farms.

The extra income that the compact provides to large farms accelerates their domination of the industry by helping them get larger and stronger. Since the amount of compact premium a producer receives is based entirely on the volume of production, the small amount of additional income a small farmer receives is often inconsequential and does nothing to keep small farms from exiting the industry. In fact, during the first year of the compact, dairy farms in New England declined at a 25 percent faster rate than the average rate of decline during the previous 2-year period.

The assertion that dairy compacts do not protect small farmers is not just something that this Minnesota Senator claims but compact supporters themselves have acknowledged as much. In the latter part of 1998, the Massachusetts commissioner of agriculture declared that the compact, after 16 months, had not protected small dairy farms. The commissioner consequently proposed a new method for distributing the compact premium to class I milk, capping the amount of premium any one dairy farm could receive and redistributing the surplus. Farms of average size or smaller would have seen their incomes increase by as much as 80 percent. However, large farm dairy interests were predictably able to kill this proposal because the assistance to small dairy farmers would have come, of course, out of their pockets. So while compact supporters perpetuate a sentimental picture of compacts enabling small family farmers to continue to work the land, the bottom line is

that compacts hasten the demise of the small farmer while enriching the bigger producers.

This claim that compacts save small dairy operations is often made in conjunction with the claim that compacts are being unfairly opposed by large-scale Midwest dairy farms that want to dominate the market. Well, this, too, is untrue because the average herd size for a Vermont dairy farm is 85 cows per herd, while the average herd size for a Minnesota dairy farm is only 57 head. Thus, Vermont dairy farms average in size almost 50 percent larger than Minnesota dairy farms.

Similarly, the South, which has also sought to have its own compact, also has larger farms than the Midwest. The average herd size of a Florida dairy farm is 246 head. That is almost four times larger than the upper-Midwest average. Incidentally, Minnesota producers would love to be getting the mailbox price that farmers in Florida and the Northeast are getting.

In November of last year, the mailbox price—which is the actual price farmers receive for their milk—in the upper-Midwest was \$12.09 per hundredweight. In the Northeast, it was \$15.02. And in Florida, due to the milk marketing order system, it was \$18.72 per hundredweight. So in the Midwest it was \$12; in the Northeast it was \$15—that is \$3 per hundredweight more—and again, in Florida, it was \$18.72, or nearly \$7 a hundredweight more, or 50 percent more for milk produced in Florida than in Minnesota. How are you going to compete against this type of unfairness in the compact system and in the milk marketing orders?

So the Northeast price is 24 percent higher than Minnesota's, and Florida's price is almost 55 percent higher. Again, Minnesota farmers would love to get those kinds of mailbox prices, but our Government program—and again, the larger farmers in these areas unfairly benefit from this program—ensures that they don't and that these other regions do.

While dairy compacts are again not saving small dairy farms in compact States, they are impacting the bottom line of small-scale producers in noncompact States; in other words, those dairy farmers outside the compact. Compacts are a zero-sum game that shifts producer markets and income from one region of the country to competing regions. They don't have small family farms, and they certainly don't deserve the continuing sanction and the support of the Congress.

Again, there are other dairy myths that must be exposed, and the truth must be told. I will be back on the floor soon to take another look at a misleading claim, try to dissect it a little bit, and put some fairness into what we often hear in the dairy debates.

If we look at this system and why it is unfair, again to look at the prices farmers receive for the milk they produce, why is it fair that if you are in the Midwest, you get \$12.60 or \$12.70

per hundredweight, but if you are in New England in the compact States, you get \$15.20, and if you are a farmer in Florida, that somehow you can receive \$18.72 per hundredweight? I don't know. We don't sell computers that way. We don't sell oranges that way. We don't sell automobiles that way. Why is it milk is different? Why is the Government picking winners and losers among those who are in the dairy industry?

If you are in the Midwest, the Government says, well, you are going to be a loser, and if you are in Florida or in the compact States, our Government programs say you are going to get more so you can be a winner. I don't think we should have this type of competition and unfair playing field with the Government picking dairy winners and losers.

I hope we bring some sanity into our dairy program. I will be back on the floor to take on another misleading claim we often hear in these dairy debates.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S. ENERGY DEPENDENCE

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I think I understand more than many the anger many Americans feel when they see gasoline pump prices at \$1.80 a gallon or higher. But I also think it is unfortunate that the Clinton-Gore administration has, for 8 years, kind of lulled Americans into believing that an unlimited supply of relatively cheap gasoline will be available from our so-called friends in OPEC.

As a consequence of that false sense of security, America's soccer moms, with the idea of running the kids here and there, have gone out and spent tens of millions of dollars on sport utility vehicles that barely get 15 miles a gallon. With today's gas prices, they find when they fill up one of those SUVs that it can put a big hole in a \$100 bill. It will cost \$70 or \$80. It is almost certain that gasoline will hit \$2 a gallon this summer because our refineries are not refining gasoline because they are still refining heating oil. Since they have not shut down for the conversion, we won't have on hand the reserves necessary to meet the requirements for the families in this country who are used to driving long distances in the summertime. It is going to happen. We are going to get \$2-a-gallon gasoline.

Americans I don't think should blame OPEC when the fault lies clearly with the Clinton-Gore administration and their energy policy, which is really

no policy. They have no policy on coal, they have no policy on oil, and they have no policy on hydro other than it is nonrenewable, and they have no policy on natural gas. They say that is the savior. But they won't open up public land for oil and gas exploration, particularly in the upper belt of the Rocky Mountains, my State of Alaska, and the OCS areas.

What they propose is to put the Secretary of Energy on an airplane and send him over to Saudi Arabia with his hand out begging the Saudis to produce more oil. They made that trip; they made that request. And the Saudis said: We have a meeting of OPEC March 27. He said: No, you don't understand. There is an emergency in the United States. We need you to produce more oil. They said: You don't understand, Mr. Secretary. Our meeting is March 27.

That is hardly an adequate response to a nation that went over there and fought a war so that Saddam Hussein could not take over Kuwait. That war was about oil.

We sought relief from the non-OPEC nations of Mexico and Venezuela. The Mexicans said: Well, isn't it rather ironic, when oil was \$11, 12, and \$13 a barrel and the Mexican economy was in the tank and in shambles, where were the Americans? Was the administration trying to help us out? We weren't there. So we got stiffed. We got poked in the eye.

Now we see oil fluctuating from \$34 a barrel a couple of days ago. It dropped \$3. It went up again today.

The point is, we are dependent on imports and we are increasing that dependence.

Since the very first day this administration took office in 1993, they declared war on domestic energy producers.

The first proposal they sent to the Congress—this is very important, because some of you do not have a memory of 1993. But the Clinton administration proposed to the Congress a new \$70 billion tax on fossil fuel produced in this country. That was a tax they planned with inflation indexing so that it would go up every single year. On top of that, they tried to add \$8 billion in new motor fuel taxes and \$1 billion in taxes on barge fuel.

Do you remember that, Mr. President? This Senator from Alaska does. A lot of folks in the administration would like us to forget that. I hope we will not forget that.

The Democratically-controlled Congress delivered to President Clinton \$42 billion in new motor vehicle taxes in the form of a 30-percent gas tax increase. The Democratically-controlled Congress delivered to President Clinton \$42 billion in new motor fuel taxes in the form of a 30-percent gas tax increase, and not a single Republican voted for that gas tax hike. We were joined by six Democrats, which resulted in what? A 50-50 tie vote. But the \$42 billion gas tax hike became re-

ality for every single American because the Vice President, AL GORE, cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of this tax hike.

That is a fact, and the RECORD will so note.

It will be interesting to hear his explanation. We heard an explanation not so long ago that, if elected, he would cancel the OCS leases. Where does he propose to get energy from, the tooth fairy?

I believe today, when gasoline is selling for more than \$2 a gallon in some parts of the country, we should suspend the 30-percent Clinton/Gore tax increase. That is the least we can do to help the American motorist. We can make sure the highway trust fund is reimbursed for any lost revenue so we can ensure that all highway construction that is authorized will be constructed and that we don't jeopardize that.

I believe it is appropriate for this payback to the trust fund because the Clinton/Gore gas tax was not used for highway construction. It was used for government spending until Republicans took over Congress and authorized the tax to be restored for highway construction.

That is a short-term fix, but I think a realistic and achievable one.

Mr. President, barely a month ago, when heating oil prices were at their peak, what did the President propose? another \$2.5 billion tax increase on the oil industry. Let me assure everyone in this chamber that those proposals are dead on arrival, as they should be.

It is not just higher energy taxes that the President demands. What has he done on the supply side? In a word, nothing. This administration has done nothing to open federal lands for exploration and development of oil and gas.

We should develop the overthrust belt of the Rocky Mountains and some of the OCS areas. The administration refuses to budge on the most promising oil field in America, ANWR. It is simply off limits. And they demand moratoriums on offshore, and on and on.

There is the story. Petroleum demands go up, and crude production goes down. That is where we are. It is as simple as that.

Mr. President, some people say that the administration does not have an energy policy. I would disagree with that statement. The Clinton-Gore administration does have an energy policy. It's goal is simply to stop energy production in the United States and make this country completely dependent on foreign oil. When Bill Clinton took office, we imported 43 percent of our oil. Today, foreign oil accounts for 56 percent of domestic consumption.

This isn't going to come as a surprise to the Department of Energy. The Department of Energy says the U.S. will be 65 percent in the year 2020—somewhere between 2010, 2015, and 2020.

That seems to be the goal of this administration rather than trying to do something about it.